Singing Politics

Sophomore Cuts Album

By WAYNE LIEBMAN

Tony Dolan threads the tape of his new album into a recorder and sits back in his chair, pursing his lips in his most Buckley-like manner.

This was my country once, it will be that way again.

Cry the beloved country until our cause has shown the way

To tomorrows worthy of our yesterdays.

A right-wing folk singer? Who's he kidding? Tony Dolan, a Calhoun sophomore, isn't kidding anyone. He's strictly for real.

We take you now to San Francisco, where thousands of Communist inspired students are leading riots against the House Committee on Un-American Activities. If we listen, we can hear what they're saying.. Abolish, abolish, abolish HUAC.'

Tony Dolan belts one out at the Exit. The Calhoun sophomore's album of right-wing folk songs is scheduled for release in January.

Dolan lets the song play out and switches off the tape. The Fairfield Prep graduate smiles self-consciously and says, "It started last summer when I was working for Mason Clink. He's very active in financial circles. I was teaching his son to play the guitar and he heard me sing. 'Make a tape,' he said, 'I'll send it to Bob Pauley of ABC.' "

"So I went to a recording studio with a friend of mine, Pete McCann, and we made this tape of four songs and gave it to Pauley. Pauley said no one starts out by signing with a big company. He thought we should send it to Key Record Company on the West Coast."

(Key started as a conservative outfit with such albums as "Songs For Taxpayers" and later branched out to more general themes.)

"Well, we did; they were interested; and we signed a contract." I get a little over five percent, and I'm committed to two more albums.

"The recording sessions were in Bridgeport. You don't really realize how difficult it is to be up for every tape of a song."

Dolan switches the tape on again. He sings in a tense but controlled voice, very strong and very pleasant. The music is not great, but good. It reflects chord progressions of the Kingston Trio.

Dolan explains why lyrics sound familiar.

"That's the thing about writing songs. You take a phrase that sticks in your mind. For all you know it could be your phrase, but it probably isn't. Like, 'I can't help but wonder where I'm bound.' I bet I could find that in six or seven books."

What about his conservatism?

"I remember being very much for Kennedy in '60. But during the campaign I changed to the right way of thinking. I read 'The Conscience of a Conservative' by Goldwater and got to thinking about it."

He switches the tape on again, this time to a song about Eastern Europe, 'Father Against Son.'

You've never seen your country destroyed

And watched your freedom die,

Why do you just stand there?

Doesn't anyone know our names?

The guitar is loud and churning. Dolan's voice is anguished. He follows with "Cuba Estara Libre" (Cuba Will be Free) in the same driving rhythm.

"I think we're very foolish to underestimate the desire and intent of the Communist apparatus." he says emphatically.

"Key wants to broadcast the last one to Cuba from New Orleans."

The tape plays on in a lighter vein.

Join the SDS, and learn to love the Communists.

Now Dr. Spock is with them, and I'm gladly for.

No other protest movement needs a baby doctor more.

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But Dolan respects the people of the New Left more than his lyrics indicate.

"There's a kindness to them. I used to make the coffeehouse rounds and I met a lot of people, good people, from their group.

"A priest once told me that in a way, they capture the Christian spirit more than most Christians.

"Yet they let their emotions overtake their reason," he says excitedly, "There's a certain inability to think clearly in that group.

"A conservative won't try to re-do society from top to bottom. He doesn't think you solve problems by passing laws. One must go to the human beings.

"Take the problem of the Negro, for example. Really there isn't much a white man can do. Basically it's their problem. They have to learn to respect themselves. There's something encouraging about this black power movement, though I deplore their excesses. You can't take the law into your own hands."

He turns the tape on again and talks blues about the New York Times.

All the news that fits, we print.
Embellished with a pinkish tint.
Did you see the front page the other day? Professor Stanley Sperba called Barry Goldwater a fink. And the ADA blew up the Statue of Liberty. That was on page 106. I think.
Just the facts, ma'am.

The words sound distinctively unfunny to the liberal ear, just as the words of Phil Ochs ("A good songwriter, but his politics stink") do not amuse the conservative.

Dolan's record is scheduled for release early next year.

"They're going to record an audience reaction on it out in California," he says. "I think they're going to get some YAF members from Berkeley.

"I asked Bill Buckley if he would write the back cover, and he said he'd do it. He's a good writer. Funny. Deep at times. Not too metaphysical, though. I kind of like metaphysics. You know I'm mad about Thomas Aquinas."

Dolan goes back to the record. "There's going to be a publicity campaign over the radio on the coast too. The premiere will be on an Oakland station. It will be aimed directly at the Berkeley campus."

Why the album, anyway?

He grins. "To show that conservatism swings."

"I'm working on two more songs: 'God is alive and living in Arizona' and 'Reverend Coffin is an Ideological Nymphomaniac.' I've been having trouble, though. Lately all I've been able to write are love songs."

"Oh yeah," he says. "There's one more thing. I should like to add that I am the only Yale undergrad with my picture hanging in Barry Goldwater's bedroom. I'm holding a sign that reads 'Barry, you will always be our hero!'"

He must be kidding.

But Tony Dolan isn't kidding anyone. He's strictly for real.

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Cry, the beloved country

Ten timely and provocative songs by Tony Dolan

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